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SUBJECT: TAJIK ELECTIONS: RAHMON SHOWS RULING PARTY WHO'S BOSS

REF: A) 09 DUSHANBE 1335 B) 08 DUSHANBE 635

DUSHANBE 00000027 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: At the pre-election congress of the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT), which dominates both houses of the Tajik Parliament (Majlisi Oli), President Rahmon won unanimous re-election as PDPT chairman and installed his son on the party's central committee. He dismissed all three PDPT deputy chairmen, including powerful Dushanbe Mayor Mahmadsayid Ubaidulloyev, and appointed Dangara-connected cronies as his new party deputies. END SUMMARY.

PDPT LEADERSHIP: GOODBYE DUSHANBE MAYOR AND PARTY FOUNDER

¶2. (SBU) At the PDPT's December 26, 2009, party congress in advance of the February 28 parliamentary elections to the lower house of parliament (Majlisi Namoyandagon), 1,900 party members unanimously re-elected President Rahmon to serve as Chairman of the party. The President's first act after re-election as party boss was to remove all three PDPT deputy chairmen, including Mahmadsayid Ubaidulloyev, who as Dushanbe Mayor, Speaker of the Majlisi Milli, and a major business magnate has a power base rivaling the President's own Kulob clan. The President did not specifically criticize the removed deputy chairmen, but said the party's organizational structure "had shown its ineffectiveness." He reduced the number of official deputy chairmen from three to two.

¶3. (SBU) The removal of Ubaidulloyev is a significant action. Although Ubaidulloyev has been careful to support the President publicly and was the first Tajik politician to refer to Rahmon as "his Excellency," political analysts have long observed a growing rivalry between the powerful Dushanbe Mayor and President Rahmon. Ubaidulloyev, reportedly, has complained privately that members of the President's family have "insatiably" taken control of the choicest sections of the economy and encroached on his business holdings. The Dushanbe Mayor, like the President, hails from the Kulob region and maintains support and wields influence among Kulobis. Ubaidulloyev has important outside support as well, through ties with Vladimir Putin and Moscow Mayor Yury Luzhkov.

¶4. (U) Rahmon removed Abdulmagid Dustiyev and Davlatali Davlatzoda as deputy chairmen. A founder of the PDPT, Dustiyev was instrumental in engineering Rahmon's ascent within the party in the early 1990s and his rise to the presidency. Davlatzoda had been First Deputy Chairman of the party since 1998 and reportedly will run for Parliament as a single mandate

candidate.

HELLO PRESIDENT'S SON AND ANOTHER DANGARA NATIVE

¶ 15. (SBU) Rahmon filled the two newly vacant positions with cronies linked to his administration and home region. He appointed Dangara native and member of Parliament Safar Safarov. A former official in the Presidential Administration, Safarov allegedly sold government positions while in office. The other PDPT deputy chairman position went to Asror Latipov, the Personnel Chief of the Presidential Administration. Latipov is from Fayzabad District near Dushanbe, but is married to a Dangaran and also is considered corrupt. An Embassy contact reports that when Latipov led an official Tajik delegation to Great Britain, he skipped the official meetings to watch a soccer match at a pub.

¶ 16. (SBU) The President also appointed his 22-year-old son, Rustam Emomali, to the party's 67-member executive committee. The young Rustam already holds two posts: Deputy Head of the Youth Association of Tajikistan and Chief of the Department to Support Medium and Small Enterprises in the State Committee on Property and Investments. He has participated in high-level state negotiations unrelated to his current responsibilities. He gained notoriety in May 2008, when he reportedly shot his uncle, the powerful business magnate Hasan Asadullozoda (Ref B), during a murky domestic squabble. Political analysts speculate that Rahmon is grooming Rustam to be his eventual successor.

DUSHANBE 00000027 002.2 OF 002

¶ 17. (SBU) After cementing his control of the PDPT, Rahmon called on the party to ensure free and fair parliamentary polls. "The more democratic our elections are run, the better our image will be in the international arena." He continued his drum beat for funds to build the Roghun hydroelectric dam. "The construction site of the Roghun hydroelectric plant is becoming these days a testing place for the people's national dignity, and party members as spiritual patrons of Roghun bear double responsibility for this great and noble cause. Every conscientious and well-to-do citizen and patriot of the Homeland is duty-bound to purchase Roghun stocks for at least 5,000 somoni (\$685)." Representatives from the region's other executive-led ruling parties, including Russia's United Russia, China's Communist Party, Kazakhstan's Nur Otan, Azerbaijan's Yeni, and Kyrgyzstan's Ak Zhol, attended the PDPT's party conference and positively rated the PDPT's achievements.

¶ 18. (SBU) COMMENT: Confident in his internal political position and generally popular in his regional strongholds, including Dushanbe, Rahmon believes he can safely marginalize Ubaidulloev in the party without splitting his Kulobi base. The appointment of Rahmon's son, Rustam, to the PDPT central committee follows a pattern of nepotistic appointments to high level positions; Rahmon's daughter Ozoda was appointed Deputy Foreign Minister last year. It appears that Rustam, at 22, is being groomed as Rahmon's successor; already he is playing an increasingly public role in the government. END COMMENT
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